

A Galaxy of Magic

Chapter 3

Aayla Secura sniffled one last time as she rested the side of her head against the stranger's chest. The way he gently rubbed her back was very calming, which was very much needed in her moment of emotional turbulence. The echoes in the Force were still reverberating, and it was impossible to block it out completely. "Are you alright?" a pleasant-sounding voice asked her. Aayla nodded and unwrapped her arms from his waist. She wiped her eyes with the back of her hand. "Here you go," he said, holding out a clean piece of cloth for her to take.

Taking the cloth, she dabbed her eyes and wiped her nose. She then looked up at the mystery man. Her first thought was that he was a very handsome human. He was over a head taller than her and had messy black hair. A small smile graced his handsome face. His eyes then lowered, and his pale cheeks turned pink. Aayla looked down, confused. She felt a jolt of impropriety as she realized she was completely nude. "Where are my clothes?!" she squeaked, covering her breasts and the area between her legs with both hands.

The human clapped his hand over his eyes and quickly apologized. "Sorry!" he said, pointing in a general direction. Aayla followed his finger and found her clothing folded neatly near the bed. She quickly went over to them and hurriedly pulled on her tight, brown pants.

"Would you mind telling me who you are, why I'm here, and why I'm nude?" she asked with authority. After waking up in such a horrifying way, she wasn't in the mood to be cordial.

"My name's Harry, and I brought you here after the men you were with attacked you. I had to remove your clothes to heal your wounds. They were severe," he explained, keeping his hand over his eyes while Aayla pulled her tank top down over her large breasts.

Now covered, she responded with, "You can open your eyes."

He slowly pulled his hand from his eyes and took a quick peek to make sure. Seeing she was clothed, he fully removed his hand, though his cheeks were still bright pink. Aayla would have laughed at his embarrassment if her mood had been a little better. Crying for so long had given her a slight headache that was threatening to get worse.

"What do you mean my men attacked me?" she asked. She couldn't remember anything that happened. The last thing she remembered was patrolling through the flower forest with her squad.

"Well ... I'm kind of stuck here, and I was trying to find a city. So, when I spotted your group, I decided to follow, hoping you would lead me there. You were walking in front when suddenly, they pointed their weapons at you," he began to explain.

This sounded somewhat plausible. She always took point to protect her men from ambushes or the dangerous creatures of this overgrown hellhole. But why would her men fire on her?

"They started firing and hit you in the back several times before I could stop them," he added. Aayla was very confused, which was worsened by her headache and the unsettling feeling in the Force.

"No," she said, shaking her head. "Why would they?" This didn't make any sense.

"I don't know why," he answered. "But I could tell that they had all received a message right before shooting you. Some of them stopped and put their hand to their helmet."

Aayla had seen the clone troopers do this many times. As clones, they typically acted similarly and had the same training.

"I have a hard time believing it," she said, rubbing her temples with her fingers to try and soothe her aching head.

"There's a mirror," he said, pointing his finger at the wall. Aayla turned and looked at it. It was then that she noticed that the room she was in was very strange. It wasn't decorated like any room she had ever seen. "Check your back," he told her. "I'll wait outside," he added, giving her some privacy. He then stepped out of the room and closed the door behind him.

Aayla stared at the closed door momentarily before stepping up to the mirror. She faced her back to the mirror and looked over her shoulder. She gasped in horror as she spotted the telltale scars of blaster shots on her lower back. The wounds didn't look fresh, though. The skin had regrown with scar tissue, making up two near-perfect circles on her otherwise smooth and flawless back. Her stomach twisted at the sight as she angled her back to try and get a better look. She then removed her shirt and discovered a third scar on her upper back, right near her spine. All she could do was stare at them in shock. She slowly reached behind her back and brushed her fingers over the highest scar. She could immediately tell it was real. The scar was slightly raised, and the skin felt a bit rougher. The sensation of her fingers touching it was different as well. There was less feeling in the damaged area. Aayla pulled her fingers away from it and sat down on the edge of the bed. She suddenly felt sick to her stomach, and her first instinct was to meditate. However, that wasn't a possibility for the time being. The Force was still a whirlwind of confusion, betrayal, and pain. Instead, she placed her hands on her knees and lowered her head. Taking several deep breaths seemed to help settle her stomach. She still felt sick, but at least she no longer felt like she was about to vomit. Standing back up, she examined her back again.

It appeared he was telling the truth. She had definitely been shot by blasters, but why would her troopers do that to her? She had always treated them well and had even risked her own life to keep them alive. Aayla immediately called upon her Jedi training. 'Look at all the facts and deduce what logically happened,' she told herself.

She recalled over the last few days that her connection to the Force seemed to have strengthened. Aayla immediately corrected herself. Her connection hadn't strengthened. It was that the veil of the Dark Side had been pulled back, allowing her a deeper connection. She felt that something was wrong, and it made her paranoid. She had then contacted her friend, Shaak Ti, on the Jedi Council and talked to her about it. Master Ti hadn't felt any shift in the Force, but she promised to look into it nonetheless. Aayla then went back to her normal routine of scouting by day. Then, if this human was to be believed, her troops received a message from an unknown source and immediately opened fire on her. She, of course, didn't remember any of that, which wasn't out of the ordinary. It was the mind's way of protecting itself from tragic or violent moments. The next thing she remembered was waking up here and feeling a sense of despair and betrayal in the Force. Something really bad had happened. The only thing she knew for certain was that a lot of Jedi were now gone, and she needed to find out how and why it had happened. Putting her top back on, she left the room to find this Harry guy. She needed answers.

As it turned out, finding him was very easy. As soon as she left the room, she found him in a sitting room, going through a bag. She took a moment to look around. This room was just as strange as the last and didn't look like anything she had ever seen. She put that out of mind for the moment. He looked up at her and reached into his bag. Her eyes widened when he pulled out her lightsaber. He held it out for her to take.

"I grabbed it before bringing you back here," he explained. Aayla slowly walked over and took it from him, trying not to appear too eager. It instantly put her at ease now that it was back in her possession. It was like a familiar friend that never left her side.

"Thank you," she said softly while storing it on her hip.

"You're welcome," he responded kindly. Aayla noticed that his pronunciation of words wasn't quite there, but she kept that to herself. She took a deep breath and introduced herself.

"My name is Aayla Secura, Jedi Master," she said. Harry smiled at her.

"Harry Potter," he gave her his full name. She nodded before continuing.

"I was hoping you might be able to explain some things," Aayla said as he put his bag away and stood up.

"I will if I can," he responded politely. Aayla nodded.

"I need to know about my clone troopers. The men I was with," she added the last part when he looked confused. "What happened to them? Where are they now?" she asked him.

"All dead, I imagine," he bluntly stated. "I had to keep them from killing you," he quickly added. Aayla looked skeptical.

"You killed them ... by yourself?" she asked him. Her clone regiment was well-trained, and it was hard to believe one human could take them all out ... unless ...

"Are you a Force user?" she asked him. It would make sense if that were the case. However, he once again looked confused.

"What's that?" he asked. Had he never heard of the Force?

"It's a field of energy created by all living things. It binds everything in the universe together, but few can harness this power," she explained to him. When it appeared he still didn't understand, she decided to show him.

Aayla held out her hand, and a piece of fruit levitated off a nearby table and slowly floated over to her. She plucked it out of the air and examined it. She had never seen fruit like this before. It was semi-spherical in shape and deep red. Harry's eyes widened slightly at the display. Aayla kept herself from smirking. It always amused her when she showed someone the power of the Force for the first time.

"Is this safe to eat?" she asked him. No sooner than she had, her stomach growled. Aayla was a bit embarrassed by the sound her stomach made, but it couldn't be helped. She was very hungry, after all.

Harry nodded and snapped his fingers. Aayla was surprised when the piece of fruit lifted from her hand and hovered in front of her face. The outer red skin began peeling itself, and a plate suddenly appeared underneath it out of thin air. Once it was fully peeled, the skin vanished, and the fruit split open into twenty thinly cut slices. The slices were lowered onto the plate, which continued to hover in front of her. Aayla was shocked by this. She had never heard of a Force user creating something out of nothing. She experimentally poked the plate and found it solid. She cautiously gripped the edges of the plate with both hands, and she felt the power holding it up release. She sat down on the couch in shock.

"How did you do that?" she asked, her voice full of wonderment. Harry shrugged.

"I've been using magic for a very long time. I've gotten quite good at it," he told her. Aayla held back a snort.

"Magic? There is no such thing," she told him with certainty.

"That's what we called it," he said.

This didn't surprise her. There were a lot of backwater planets whose people thought the Force was some magical power.

"Regardless of what we call it ... how did you make this plate appear?" she asked, still examining it. She tapped her fingernail against it and found it was made of some type of ceramic.

"I focus on what I want with as much detail as I can and will it into existence," he explained. "It's not as easy as it sounds," he made sure to add.

"So you can make anything?" she asked, looking up at him. He shook his head.

"No. There are exceptions to what can be conjured. For example, I can't create food, but I can create water. The whole thing gets confusing the more you think about it ... so I try not to," he admitted.

Aayla's stomach growled again, so she picked up a slice of the fruit. She held it to her nose and sniffed it. It smelled pleasant enough. She took a small bite to test it out. Tarty sweetness made her cheeks slightly pucker, but she found it quite tasty. She popped the rest into her mouth and chewed.

"Anyway ... After I dealt with them, I brought you back here and healed your back. When I was sure you were in stable condition, I went back to the place you were attacked."

Harry explained how he followed a ship back to their base. "They were packing up everything in a hurry. It was only a few hours after I got there, they flew up into the sky and left," he told her.

Aayla listened while slowly eating her fruit. She wasn't in the mood to eat, but her stomach begged to differ. "So they're all gone?" Harry nodded.

"There's nothing left in the camp ... at least nothing of value," he said. "Just some junked machines and whatnot."

"None of this makes any sense. We were sent here to fight the Separatist forces poisoning Felucia's water supply. Why would they suddenly leave before finishing our mission?" she wondered. She then put down the plate and stood up. "I need to see it for myself. Is the camp close?" she asked him. He shook his head.

"It's far. Many days on foot," he explained. "But I can quickly take you there."

Aayla quickly agreed. Harry led her to the exit, and Aayla was shocked to discover she had been in a tent inside of a cave. She gaped at the tent in amazement. "There shouldn't be that much space inside," she gasped, brushing her fingers across the tent's fabric.

"Magic is a wondrous thing," Harry said, amused by her reaction. "This way," he said and began walking. "Just walk straight through this part of the wall."

Aayla watched as he walked right into the stone wall and disappeared. Aayla just stood there with her mouth slightly open. Harry then poked his head back in, which was an absurd sight. "Come on," he called out, waving her over. His head disappeared once again, and Aayla held her breath and followed after him. The change was instantaneous. One second, she was inside a cave with no exit, and the next, she was standing outside under the beating sun, surrounded by supply crates. Aayla suddenly remembered there was somewhere else she needed to be. She was just about to leave when Harry tapped her on the forehead. Aayla blinked, confused for a moment.

"Sorry, I have diversionary protections around my camp, so I stopped them from affecting you," he explained. Aayla blinked away the confusion before turning to him.

"They work well. I felt like I needed to leave without knowing where I was going to go," she admitted. "I'd like to know more about them later if you're willing," she said while Harry nodded.

She looked around and found that there were probably over two hundred crates stacked up and scattered around. She knew exactly where these had come from. She looked at him as though he was crazy.

"Did you steal these from the base?" she asked him. She could tell he was trying hard not to smile.

"They weren't using them," he shrugged. Aayla shook her head. Could this day get any crazier, she asked herself.

"I can take us there with my magic," Harry told her, and she kept herself from rolling her eyes at him calling it magic. "It'll be near instantaneous, but it won't feel very pleasant," he warned. Aayla had already seen the strange things his power could do, so she had no reason not to believe him.

"How does it feel?" she asked him.

"Like you're being sucked through a tube way too small for your body to fit. It doesn't last long, but it's jarring the first time you experience it," he told her.

"Is it safe?" she asked the most important question.

"I've never had any problems with it," he answered confidently. Aayla nodded and agreed.

"Good," he smiled kindly and stepped up to her. "I have to hold onto you," he said, grabbing her around the inside of her bicep. "It's best if you take a deep breath."

Aayla followed his instructions before finding herself squeezed from all directions. It was like the air was pulled from her lungs as an unknown force pushed equally from all sides. Just when it felt like she was about to suffocate, her feet touched solid ground. It was only thanks to years of Jedi training that kept her from falling on her bottom. She folded over with her hands on her knees, gasping for breath. "That ... was ... horrible," she said between breaths. Harry chuckled and rubbed her back.

"It gets easier. The first time is always the worst," he said. Aayla noticed that the turbulent feeling of the Force was soothed when he touched her. It made her feel better. Sadly, he removed his hand after a few seconds, and Aayla pushed herself back into a standing position. She instantly noticed that this wasn't the base site.

"Where ...?" she began, but Harry quickly explained.

"This is where you were attacked. After leaving you in my tent, I found a ship full of ... clone troopers ..." he said, trying to remember what she had called them. "... searching the area. I followed their ship to the base. As you can see, they didn't bother taking the bodies with them," he said dryly.

Harry watched as Aayla quietly examined the few bodies that hadn't been blown away by the concussive impact of his Banishing Charm. She stopped at one and stared down at him. Harry slowly made his way to her side. The clone wore the typical white armor worn by the rest, but some of the pieces were painted yellow. His helmet was severely broken, with a large chunk ripped out of the upper right side. Harry could see about a quarter of his face. He looked human.

"His name was Bly ... He was a friend," she said softly as she stared down at the dead man.

"He was the first to fire at your back," Harry countered with as much compassion as he could muster. Aayla remained quiet. After a minute of silence, Aayla exhaled loudly and faced him.

"The base, please," she said, covering her emotions. Harry nodded and took her arm again. They appeared in the abandoned base, and once again, it took a moment for her to regroup from the uncomfortable travel.

"You're right. It wasn't as bad this time, but I'd still prefer to use a speeder," she told him. Harry didn't know what a speeder was, but it sounded cool.

Aayla walked into the middle of the clearing and looked around. Harry was right. Nearly everything had been cleared away. A couple of stripped-down AT-TE tanks had been left behind, but not much else. The tents and warehouses were gone, as were her and Barriss's starfighters. That didn't bode well for the Jedi Knight. She sighed and turned to Harry.

"I had hoped they would have left my starfighter, but it seems my hope was misplaced," she confessed.

"Starfighter?" Harry asked.

"My ship," she explained in a simpler manner.

"You know how to fly one?" he asked hopefully. Aayla nodded, and he waved for her to follow him. Harry led her to the farthest end of the clearing and waved his hand. Four ships appeared out of nowhere. "How did you ...?" she asked for what felt like the hundredth time that day.

"I made them invisible the last time I was here. Though, I don't know if they work or not," he told her. "Can these get us out of here?"

Aayla walked around one, running her hand over the smooth metal hull. "These are ARC-170 starfighters, and yes, they have hyperdrives. These were removed from battle for servicing. However, there should be enough parts between them to get one flying," Aayla said happily. Having their own ship was much better than finding the nearest city and dealing with the Separatists and locals, especially considering what had just happened to the Jedi. She then had another thought.

"There might be a problem. I don't have any tools, and the 501st didn't leave anything behind," she said, looking around again.

"I thought of that ... Follow me," he said, leading her down the edge of the clearing. He waved his hand again, and a whole mechanic's shop worth of tools suddenly appeared. Aayla smiled in appreciation.

"Good thinking," she praised him, mentally reviewing everything there. "This is more than enough to get the job done. You even had the foresight to hide an Astromech droid."

Judging by her approving tone, he assumed he had made the right choice. "Should we get to work now or ...?"

"Let me go run a diagnostic test on the ships so I can see which one is worth fixing," she said, flipping a switch on the Astromech droid, as she called it. The little robot suddenly started beeping and rotating its domed head. After grabbing an electronic tablet, Aayla ordered it to follow her, and it dutifully complied. Harry followed them to the ships, where the droid extended a metal arm and plugged into each ship, one after another. Aayla constantly checked the tablet and poked at the screen with her finger until she finally nodded.

"This one needs the least amount of work," she said, walking up to the second one in line. "But it will take some time for me to go over the readings on the datapad."

Aayla was just about to suggest they go back to his camp but stopped herself. Harry barely knew her, and it wouldn't be right to invite herself to stay with him. Thankfully, she didn't even have to ask.

"Should I hide the ships and tools before we go back to the tent?" he asked her. Aayla's tension lightened, and she breathed a sigh of relief.

"Yes, I believe that would be wise. The 501st won't return, but there are still Separatists in the area who would love to take or destroy these ships," she replied. She watched carefully as Harry waved his hand at the ships. All four disappeared from view. Aayla didn't feel anything from the Force. It was like he wasn't even using it. She followed him to the tool cache, where he did the same thing.

"Let's get out of this heat," he suggested, something Aayla readily agreed with. She let him take her arm, and one short but uncomfortable trip later, they were back outside the hidden cave. She followed him through the illusion and into the tent, where cool, dry air awaited.

"I'm going to make some food. I have plenty, but I don't know ... I mean, I've never met one of your kind, so I don't know if you can eat ..." he kept stumbling over his words in an attempt not to offend her. Aayla smiled softly at him.

"Twi'leks can eat the same food as humans," she assured him. He smiled back and nodded. It didn't take him long to put a plate of steaming hot food in front of her. She wasn't sure what it was, but it smelled good. She tried it and found it satisfactory. They chatted while eating in an effort to get to know each other better. Once finished, Harry took her plate away, and Aayla got up from the table. She winced as she did.

"What's wrong?" Harry asked as he snapped his fingers and cleaned the plate. What he could do with his power truly amazed her. She would make sure to ask him about it once they were more comfortable with each other.

"My back," she groaned, stretching her shoulders.

"Does it still hurt?" he asked, stepping up behind her and examining her exposed skin. Aayla shook her head.

"My muscles are very sore," she truthfully explained.

"Understandable," he said. "Your wounds went all the way down to the bone. We probably should have taken it easy today."

Aayla groaned and rolled her shoulders. It felt like she had just stepped out of a Bacta chamber after a serious injury. "I can give you a pain reliever ... if you'd like one," he said.

“That would be appreciated, thank you,” she politely responded. Harry went back into his bag and dug around. He pulled out a small glass bottle filled with a liquid. He handed it to her. “Drink the whole thing,” he said.

She took the bottle from him and removed the top. She sniffed it, and her nose wrinkled cutely. Harry chuckled at her response. “It doesn’t taste any better. It’s best to drink it fast.”

Aayla did just that. She quickly swallowed the contents and handed him the bottle. The effects were almost immediate. The ache in her back dulled until it could barely be felt. She stretched and tested the medicine’s resolve. She smiled at him, letting him know that it had worked.

The pair spent a few more hours talking while Aayla reviewed the data on the device Harry learned was called a datapad. Once it got late, Harry slipped away and took a quick shower while Aayla continued to work. Harry left the bathroom in pajama pants and a white t-shirt and went up to Aayla, who was still plucking away at the datapad.

“The bathroom is free if you want to shower,” he told her. Aayla looked confused.

“Bathroom,” she repeated in English. Harry scratched his head in embarrassment. He explained what the bathroom was.

“Oh, you mean the fresher,” she said.

“Yes, that,” he nodded. Aayla stood up and stretched. Harry avoided looking at her chest as she did.

“I’d like that, but I don’t have a change of clothing,” she said, looking down at her normal attire. She didn’t fancy sleeping in her tight pants, especially with them not being clean. Harry studied her form briefly before a long shirt appeared in his hand. Aayla took it from him and held it up to her body. The neck hole had a slit going down the front, just big enough to allow her lekku through. The fabric was thin and very soft. She smiled happily at him.

“This will do, thank you,” she said, taking it into the fresher. Once inside, Aayla received another shock. There appeared to be a swimming pool in the middle of the room. “Harry?” she called out. The door opened, and he peeked his head inside.

“Yeah?”

“What is that?” she asked, pointing to the giant tub.

“A bathtub. It’s for bathing, though I also use it to swim. You know ... for exercise,” he explained. “Do you want to try it?” he asked. Before she could answer, he walked over to three handles and turned the middle one. Massive amounts of water and soapy foam shot out of a huge spout and filled the giant tub in less than a minute. Aayla just watched with wide, surprised eyes.

"There's a stack of clean towels right over there," Harry said, pointing to the rack. "Have fun," he said before leaving and closing the door behind him.

When the door closed, she knelt and brushed the water's surface with her fingers. The water was warm, and the foam smelled quite nice. Aayla smiled and began to undress.

A Galaxy of Magic

Aayla spent an hour in the bath, soaking her muscles in the warm water. When she was done, she got out and dried herself with one of his large, fluffy towels. She pulled the shirt over her head and looked at her reflection in the full-length mirror attached to the wall. The shirt reached the middle of her thighs and was a bit baggy. It wasn't what she would call flattering, but it was very comfortable, which was the most important thing. She then pulled the shirt up to her shoulders and turned around. Aayla sighed when she examined the three circular spots of scar tissue. The sight shouldn't have affected her so much. She was a Jedi, and as such, vanity was heavily frowned upon. Still, she couldn't help it. Her beauty was an important tool that she used on many missions. Now, her back was a scarred mess. Not wanting to look at it any longer, she quickly pulled down her shirt and left the fresher.

She found Harry putting a pillow and blanket on the couch, and he looked up and smiled when she joined him. "You can sleep in the bed," he suggested. "I'll take the couch." Aayla immediately shook her head.

"No. This is your place. It's only fair that I sleep here. Besides, I'm much smaller than you," she countered.

"I don't mind," he told her, but Aayla wouldn't relent.

"I insist," she said, sitting down on the couch. Harry sighed.

"Well ... If you're sure," he said. "The light switch is right here," he said, walking over to the wall. He flicked the switch, which turned off the lights, before quickly turning them back on. "If you need anything, just ask," he told her, and Aayla nodded. They said their goodnights before Harry retired to his room.

Aayla yawned and unfolded the blanket. She then turned off the light and slipped under the covers. It wasn't difficult falling asleep. She was out cold within ten minutes of her head hitting the pillow. Unfortunately, her dreams didn't allow for a pleasant rest. She tossed and turned, whimpering as one nightmare after another flooded her sleeping mind. While sleeping, her mind was more open to the Force and, thus, more easily influenceable to those seeking to harm her.

She could feel that same greasy presence in the Force, searching for those who had escaped its purge. It wasn't long before it turned its sights on her. She tried to hide, to make her presence

smaller, but it was of no use. There was no hiding from the watchful eye of the Dark Side. It hissed in glee, seeking and searching for her exact location. Suddenly, a warmth brightened her dark corner of the Force, and the corrupted tendril of power immediately retreated. Aayla shot up into a sitting position, her eyes wide open. The room was dark and cold, but she found her forehead sweaty.

“Are you alright?” she heard Harry’s voice through the darkness of the room. Aayla exhaled and wiped her forehead with the back of her hand. “I heard you whimpering, and then the tent began vibrating,” he explained.

“Sorry,” Aayla quietly apologized. “Bad dream,” she lied. She wasn’t in the mood to talk about the horrifying problems she was facing.

“Do you want to talk about it?” he hesitantly asked.

“No. I think I’ll be fine. Thank you for checking on me,” she unconvincingly smiled but wasn’t sure if he could even see it.

“Okay. I’ll be in my room if you need me,” he told her and went back to his room.

Aayla flopped back on the couch and ran her palms down her face. This was the second time in a row that this ... thing ... was trying to locate her. Aayla felt helpless and alone as she went over everything in her head. ‘What had stopped it from finding her?’ she asked herself. Both times, the Dark Side fled in fear right before she woke up. ‘And both times, Harry was there waiting for her,’ she reminded herself.

She remembered hugging him and crying into his chest. She felt the same warmth in him that made the Dark Side recoil. ‘I can’t keep going on like this,’ she told herself. She couldn’t even fall asleep without becoming a danger to herself and others. Aayla hesitantly got out of bed and crept to Harry’s room. She opened the door and slid in.

“Aayla?” she heard his voice calling out to her. Aayla ignored it and slid into bed next to him. She scooted so close that she pressed against his side. She lay there silent for a moment, hoping he wouldn’t tell her to leave. Instead, he slid his arm between the back of her head and lekku. Aayla instantly felt lighter. She buried her face in his chest as he held her close. Her arm slid over his waist, and she rested her palm on his warm, bare skin. Closing her eyes, Aayla quickly fell back to sleep. Whatever or whoever was searching for her stayed far away from her that night.